



**NOAA Teacher at Sea**  
**Dennis Starkey**  
**Onboard NOAA Ship MILLER FREEMAN**  
**June 15 – August 4, 2006**

**NOAA Teacher at Sea: Denny Starkey**

Aboard NOAA Ship MILLER FREEMAN (In port)

“Surveying the Catch”- Pollack Studies in the Bering Sea

July 16, 2006

**“On Land to Off  
Shore”**

**Science and  
Technology Log**

Hello to all! I welcome you, and myself, aboard the good ship MILLER FREEMAN in the Bering Sea. I am a sixth grade classroom teacher from Wildhorse Plains, Montana. I will be aboard the ship from July 16 to August 4. This is the MILLER FREEMAN's third tour this summer of 2006 surveying the Walleye Pollock. My goal is to

keep you informed of the importance of this scientific endeavor and share with you the experience of being a “land lover” at sea while drawing observations of the uniqueness of spending time in a self-contained salt-water vessel, also known as a ship!



Executive Officer Sean Cimiculla oversees the operations of an on-board fire drill. The sailing crew trains regularly for fire scenarios on the ship.

The NOAA task is to survey the density and population of a very valuable commercial fish called the Walleye Pollock. The results of this survey will be forwarded to fishing regulatory agencies that will look at the data collected to make decisions that may affect the catch limit, areas that are fishable, and length of the Walleyed Pollock season.

You may have never have heard of the Walleyed Pollock, but I bet you have tasted it! This fish is commonly used in the United States as a generic fish entry. Frozen food companies often use this species as the main ingredient in fish sticks, imitation crab, and fish sandwiches. Fast-food chain restaurants like McDonalds and Burger King offer it in their fish selections on the menu. Other countries also have high stakes in the profitability and abundance of this fish in Bering Sea waters. Japan, and especially

Russia, both have a great interest in the success of the catch and population trends for these cold-water schooling fish. Russian fishermen harvest the Pollock from the waters in their coastal territory along the Bering Sea as well.

Near the end of this leg of the survey, the MILLER FREEMAN is scheduled to cross into Russian waters to continue the study to get a truly encompassing sample of the entire cross-section of the Bering Sea.

### **International and Domestic Implications**

Aboard the ship are two Russian Biologists that are working in conjunction with the NOAA fisheries biologists to record the sampling results of our work here. They hope to use this information in their country to relay the same boundaries and limits as mentioned above. The success of the Pollock harvest in northern Bering Sea has the potential to make or break the profitability of the small family owned fisheries as well as the larger corporate fishing plants. A large part of the annual harvest is exported to counties all over the world. You might say this species is the “bread and butter” of the annual fishing season. The location and prediction of a sustaining population of Pollock in the Bering is paramount to the livelihood of many stakeholders. Nearly 72 percent of all the schooling groundfish taken from this area in 2004 were Pollock!

### **Survey Update to July 16, 2006**

#### *Leg I and Leg II*

The preliminary findings have been consistent in finding the Pollock thus far. The MILLER FREEMAN has been systematically plotting a course that has traditionally been a good source for Pollock harvest and study. The technology survey instruments and sampling devices have worked well, and the density of Pollock has been measured.

#### *Leg III*

The MILLER FREEMAN speeds out to sea to pick up where it left off doing the study. It is stocked with fisheries biologists setting up and checking instruments. It will take us a full day's and a night's travel to reach our starting point.

As of July 16, formal permission has not been granted to enter the international waters of Russia. The crew is hoping this can be rectified or alternative studies and revisions will need to be incorporated on this third leg.

As of July 16, The Ship OSCAR DYSON remains at port in Dutch Harbor, Alaska. This other NOAA vessel is similarly equipped to study Pollock but is undergoing some repairs on its generating plant. It is hoped that it will meet up with us in the Bering Sea to coordinate some surveys maneuvers with the MILLER FREEMAN.